

Bryan Daily Eagle

AND PILOT

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A PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION.

The Fort Arthur board of trade has
addressed a circular letter to the
newspapers of Texas with the object
of enlisting them in a campaign for
the establishment of a state public
service commission. The letter says:"A state public service commission
is something like a state railroad com-
mission, except that instead of having
authority over railroads it regulates
electric light companies, water com-
panies, street car companies, gas com-
panies, telephone companies and
sewer companies. There are excellent
state public service commissions in
Wisconsin, New York, California, Mas-
sachusetts, New Jersey and Maryland,
and when the citizens there are ag-
grieved by the treatment of local com-
panies they go to the commission and
obtain redress without expense. In
states where no such commissions ex-
ist there is no relief except by a suit
at law, costly, tedious, unsatisfactory
and so far beyond the resources of the
plain citizen that he usually prefers
to swallow his wrongs and do nothing."It will be noticed that the various
kinds of concerns mentioned—water,
gas, electricity, etc.—are local. They
are not regional or national, like rail-
roads. It might be asked why local
companies can not be restrained by
local authorities. There are two good
reasons. One is that they have so
much political influence as to be in-
vulnerable; the other is that, even
when the city government happens to
be against them, their legal position
is very strong and they can usually
not be brought to terms. The law does
everything to protect them, and very
little to protect the consumer; it is to
correct this condition that public ser-
vice commissions have sprung into be-
ing, and they have been a blessing
wherever instituted."In Wisconsin the corporations at
first bitterly opposed a public servicecommission, but after experience of
its workings they found it often their
friend, for, while it restrains them
from oppressing the consumer, it pro-
tects them against unreasonable de-
mands, and by opening a safety-valve
for the wrath of the private citizen
heads off drastic legislation."There is at the present time in the
laws of Texas nothing that shields the
ordinary man from the unfair treat-
ment of a telephone company, ice,
electric light, water or other utility
concern. He can, of course, go to law,
at great expense, and fight the cor-
poration, and if successful obtain
trivial damages, but no lawyer would
encourage a friend to enter upon such
a suit."Relying on their immunity, local
corporations charge whatever the
traffic will bear, give such service as
suits their convenience, treat com-
plaints with indifference and con-
tempt, let their plants run down and
become inadequate, exasperate, over-
charge, humiliate and discourage ev-
ery household who is compelled to
do business with them. They used to
do this in New York, but now the
humblest citizen may go to the state
commission and lay his wrongs be-
fore them, and without further trouble
or expense to him the commission
takes the matter in hand as his cham-
pion and obtains summary correction
of the abuse. It has never been found
that these state commissions overstep
their power, and if one were estab-
lished in Texas it would undoubtedly
make as high a record for moderation
and fair dealing as has our railroad
commission."The Eagle believes that municipal
ownership of the class of corporations
that the proposed commission would
have to deal with is the best solution
of the question. It has proven so in
Bryan with the water and light and
sewer systems, and the telephone sys-
tem will be acquired or a new one
will be put in if the service continues
to be unsatisfactory.Later, a municipal ice plant is a
strong possibility. As far as tried,
municipal ownership of the public
utilities has given practically univ-
ersal satisfaction, yielding a good in-
come to the city treasury instead of
being a heavy expense, as the private
corporations were.

WHY PEOPLE BECOME PANICKY.

Brave men sometimes become pan-
icky from a sudden impulse of fear,
and the panic is the greater when the
cause is imaginary. Those who served
in the great war between the states
in the early sixties can recall in-
stances that came under their per-
sonal observation. One notable case
was that of Gen. John C. Vaughn of
Tennessee (who had proven his cour-
age on many a well fought field) while
out reconnoitering with his staff being
stampeded by an ambulance rattling
over a rugged mountain road. This
occurred in the summer of 1864,
among the mountains of southwestern
Virginia. Had it taken place earlier
it would have ruined Vaughn's reputa-
tion as a soldier. As it was, it served
only as a good joke on the general.Speaking of the meningitis scare,
the Tyler Courier-Times says:"It is but a proof that fear is con-
tagious and also extremely hurtful;
and that it often takes a deep hold
upon the people when the cause is
imaginary. At present the imagina-
tion is inflamed and wild rumors are
flying thick, especially among igno-
rant people. Where people are ex-
citable or ignorant they cling to ru-
mors and refuse to accept authenti-
cated figures or facts."The difference between the brave
and the cowardly is that when the
former have time to think they see
how foolish it is to be panicky, while
the latter continue to suffer the de-
grading thrall of fear.

STEP TOWARD THE SINGLE TAX.

When you render your property for
taxes this year just put about 25 per
cent more value to the land and de-
duct it from the improvements. The
total being the same there can be no
complaint from the board of equaliza-
tion and in all probability the board
will be glad to see the change. By
rendering the land at high value the
owners of improved property can set
the example for increasing the value
of the vacant property and thereby
eventually bring about a reduction in
the tax required of improved property.
—Beaumont Enterprise.Why not go all the way and put all
the valuation on the land? A tax on
improvements is a tax on labor. This
important economic truth is gaining
ground and will ultimately be recog-
nized.Bryan ought to have an official
scavenger. As it is, a householder
often has much trouble getting some-
one to do scavenging and recently
it has been impossible for some to
induce the negroes, who have been ac-
customed to do it, to clean their clos-ets. If some more effective method
is not adopted before warm weather
the consequences may be serious. The
scavenger should have authority to in-
spect closets and cellars and to clean
them at the expense of the owners
when necessary, whether they order
it or not.At the Yoakum banquet in Houston
Col. R. M. Johnston is reported as
saying: "I am going to take off some
of my politics and I am going to de-
voted more time to the advancement
and upbuilding of prosperity in this
section." Colonel Johnston has been
deep in politics for a third of a cen-
tury and if an old sinner like him can
reform there certainly is hope for us
kids.A report comes from China that the
American missionaries are divided
among themselves, some supporting
the old government and others being
active partisans of the revolution. It
seems that even the scouts and skim-
ishers of the "armies advancing to
conquer the kingdom of sin" can't
keep from meddling in politics, con-
trary to the express teaching of the
Master whom they profess to serve.There is some complaint of boys
with airguns shooting recklessly,
breaking windows and doing other
damage. It is also said that some of
them shoot at and sometimes kill
small birds protected by law. If they
don't quit violating the law they are
sure to get into trouble sooner or
later, and then their parents will have
to suffer for neglect of duty.Now that the quarantine is out of
the way, everybody can join in and
whoop up the road bond election.
There ought to be a large vote and
every voter should cast his ballot ac-
cording to his convictions, but those
whose convictions are on the side of
good roads ought to be a good, strong
majority.Of course, it is desirable to have
the whole county embraced in the
good roads plan, but if a majority of
the people in any district are opposed
to it The Eagle believes they should
be left to their own devices. Those
who pay the heft of the taxes want
good roads and intend to have them.The senior editor of The Eagle is
perfectly willing for readers of both
papers to judge whether he or the
editor of the Navasota Examiner is
the more inclined to be suspicious
without cause."You can't keep a good man down."
Nor a good thing; for instance, Oleo-
margarine Bill is before congress
again.

Meningitis Not Contagious.

From the Dallas News is taken an
item concerning meningitis in that
city, as follows:Attention is called by the health
officer to the fact that the records do
not show a case developed upon any
doctor practicing medicine, any nurse
trained for handling sickness, any un-
dertaker or employee of an undertaker
handling any body of a person de-
ceased of meningitis, any digger of a
grave, any policeman or fireman and
but a single case of a telephone op-
erative, which developed early in De-
cember and fully recovered."There appears to be no infection
nor contagion in the country cases,
nor is there anything to indicate that
they are to be traced in any sort of
line to the city. Cold, damp, foggy
weather seems to foster the develop-
ment of the germ producing the dis-
ease. As soon as the weather moderates
I believe the disease will be sub-
dued."Assuming that the Dallas experi-
ence, where over two hundred cases
are involved, represents the true na-
ture of the disease, there is to be
drawn one of two conclusions:

1. Either meningitis is not com-
municable by contact with an afflicted
person, or,
2. The precautions taken by those
who have come into contact with so
many cases have been effectually pre-
ventive.

The "precautions" popular in Dallas,
where Dr. Sophian has been in consul-
tation with the physicians, consist in
nose and throat spraying and taking
of internal medicines, such as have
been recommended in Temple.There are plenty of students of the
disease who claim that the immunity
is on account of meningitis not being
contagious.—Temple Telegram.

Quarantine and Common Sense.

The health officer of Temple de-
clares emphatically that with the
present lights before him, this city
will not become party to any quaran-
tine measures.Shotgun quarantine is one of the
most demoralizing forms of mob law
extant. Already one victim of the
spirit has been reported, and others
may be expected.There are diseases which call for
quarantine of one city against an-

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